

# **Council on Correction Meeting Minutes May 8, 2018 Polytech High School**

## **Attendance COC Members**

Darryl Chambers  
Jane Hovington  
Ed Perez  
Jennifer Powell  
Muhammad Salaam  
Richard Senato

## **DOC**

Alan Grinstead, Deputy Commissioner

## **Sunset Committee**

Julie Fedele

### **1. Call to Order by Richard Senato**

### **2. Approval of Minutes**

Motion was made by Jennifer Powell to accept the minutes with necessary corrections, seconded by Jane Hovington to approve the minutes with the correction that Joseph Paesani was not in attendance at the last meeting.

### **2. Review of letter from DOC to Sunset Committee**

Richard Senato asked if we had reviewed the letter from DOC to the Sunset Committee. All members had read the letter. Mr. Senato discussed the recent graduation and how impressive it was. There were very positive comments from the public. There was additional discussion on the graduation.

### **4. Discuss Sunset Committee's Recommendation**

Darryl Chambers wanted to discuss the recent meetings from the Sunset Committee. Initially the Sunset Committee presented nine recommendations which they had developed pertaining to COC. He discussed what had transpired at the meetings regarding these recommendations. He further discussed the merging with CJC and the pros and cons of such a move. This was just a topic for discussion with the Sunset Committee, there is no definite decision. The information received from the Sunset Committee and explained how they wanted to assist the COC in fulfilling the council's responsibility. There was discussion regarding our use of an attorney from the Attorney General's Office should the need arise. One of the things the public respects

about our position right now is the fact that we are perceived as being independent and willing to listen to all aspects of the public who are influenced by DOC.

Mr. Grinstead advised he felt there was a suggestion for training of the coalition members. This could possibly cost to provide the needed training. For this is reason the suggestion had arisen regarding a budget of \$5,000 to cover any cost which might arise. There was more discussion on the issue of the recommendations of the Sunset Committee.

Darryl wants to convey to the committee what is really transpiring with people coming out of the prison and how life really is as opposed to how people perceive them to be. It is not just a blurred process we want to make sure to have transparency to what our process is and to be fair to the families and the inmates as well as the officers within the facility.

## **5. Student Engagement**

Jennifer Powell advised one of the suggestions of the governor was to get high school students involved to determine what we can do to improve both the employment of DOC Officers and improving their conditions. That's one of the things she looking into to research this. There is some difficulty in that many of the DOC employees do not go home and talk to their children about what needs to be done at the institution. Many of the prisoners may not have an open communication with their children as to their conditions. This project would be two-fold. 1) to reach out to the youth for ideas encouraging our younger generation. All of us have been in this field for such a long time that maybe we are not seeing the forest for the trees 2) Basically work to open young people's eyes to potential solid employment and where they can go with DOC as a career.

There are two projects she would like us to support as a council. First is to open up a line of communication with the students and see if they have any novel ideas about how to improve both conditions for the officers and the prisoners. And the other part is to continue to try and engage the students in considering corrections as a potential career.

Richard Senato asked if they had a Criminal Justice Programs in the school. Jennifer Powell explained there are courses, one is a college level course offered to the seniors in corrections which leads to a college course and can lead to the new Correction Certification. Once the student graduates from Polytech they can go to Del Tech and enroll in the Corrections Program.

Richard Senato asked if Jennifer had anyone from the DOC come down and speaks with the classes. Jennifer stated she has previously. She also stated she would like to do a town hall for the students. Or have the seniors host the town hall and have DOC

officers come and do a presentation to for seniors and align it with a job fair. It might be difficult for this year, but something the council can plan for next year. There was additional discussion on the merits of the program. In response to the question as to what age the youth could enroll in the program Alan Grinstead said the age bracket for entrance in the academy is 19 ½. You can enter the training at 19, but when they are sworn in they must be 19 ½.

If the council moves forward on this idea Alan Grinstead advised we should provide as much advance notice as possible to allow the recruiters to align the town hall with their schedule.

Joe Paesani questioned whether Jennifer Powell had considered coupling it with the Del Tech Criminal Justice Program when the council schedules the town hall. Most seniors will not be eligible for Del Tech for at least a year. The town hall will allow them to prepare to move into the Del Tech program.

If the students plan for certification while at Poly Tech, it could give them hiring preference and once hired they can go and continue their education at Del Tech and there is state funding for additional education. This is funding has always been available; Del Tech is using the funding as an incentive for enrollment in the corrections program.

#### **6. Next Steps/Summarize action items**

There is a meeting on Thursday May 10, 2018 at 12:00 before the Sunset Committee. Darryl Chambers and Muhammad Salaam will out together some talking points for the meeting. Darryl stated he would be unable to attend and he asked Vice Chair Muhammad Salaam to attend on his behalf. Along with him Richard Senato and Jane Hovington will attend. Joe Paesani suggested the council also present them with the By-laws, minutes and the agendas of the previous meeting. Darryl requested a copy of the nine recommendations from the Sunset Committee to present to the council.

\*Council will be touring James T. Vaughn Correctional Center on May 29, 2018

#### **7. Provide Updates on last meetings Public Comment**

Darryl asked for an update from the last meeting during Public Comment. Alan stated she had given him a proposal. The requests from Lori Alberts are being reviewed. DOC is looking into programs, looking at the different things she touched on and Alan was not sure all of her request can be met, but they are reviewing her request, there are four or five pages. She was unable to attend today. Alan Grinstead has gone through the requests and will advise her of the response.

## **8. Public Comment**

Ave Mulhern.....National Fatherhood Initiative discussed her program and how beneficial this program would be for the inmates. She provided statistics on the need for encouragement of the re-entry piece. She was interested in the council's position on this type of program. The Inside/Out Dad is being held at the Sussex Facility but she feels more can be done if they were able to begin working with the inmates before they get to work release. There have been programs throughout the state at different facilities. Fatherhood.org information can be found to substantiate their program. All statistical data can also be found on the website. Alan Grinstead took the information presented to scan and send out a copy to all the Council members as she only brought one copy. Mr. Chambers offered to send her a copy of the email address for the council members.

Mike.....What is the grievance process has there been any changes in how things are handled are they done independently or are they handled in-house. Alan Grinstead advised the process is still in-house and even with the review it is not DOC intention to farm it out. A RFP has been sent out for someone to come and review the program.

Lori Albert was unable to attend, but she contacted members of the Council. She has two issues 1) the apparent strip search. We have been advised that once the legal hurdles are over regarding the search, Commissioner Phelps will bring Darryl Chambers or Muhammad Salaam in to view the tape to see if there were any infractions that occurred. Lori also contacted council members regarding an inmate who was successful in a suicide. She claimed he had been put on suicide watch. Alan stated the gentleman had not been put on suicide watch. Alan advised he would look into the matter.

Jennifer Powell asked to speak regarding a complaint presented to her about the holding cells in the courts. DOC is in charge of the holding cells in the courthouses. Some of the conditions in the holding cells are not following normal procedures. Whereas Correctional Officers entering the holding area still carrying their weapons. According to all SOP when you're in incarceration facilities and in close quarters with individuals being held or transported you lock your weapon. The jurisdictions in these facilities are DOC. This complaint came from staff within these facilities. She did not get specific information as to which courthouse this is pertained.

Muhammad Salaam how can we remedy heading information off at the pass. If things happen within the facility which will reach the council, how can we get information in advance so we are aware of what is happening in the facility so we are not be blindsided. There was a Facebook page incident out regarding a strip search, a recording of how he was strip searched and what transpired was shown on Facebook. We need to know what is going on in these types of matters. We need DOC to share

info so we are aware of issues. Alan Grinstead said that in some cases they cannot report to the committee because of confidentiality. They share as much as possible, but they cannot violate rights of others.

Meeting adjourned.